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ABSTRACT

This survey of teacher attitudes toward inservice training programs was done to compare reactions of teachers affiliated with a regional Teacher Corps project to those in non-Teacher Corps schools. The rationale was that as faculty turnover in public schools decreases due to fiscal constraints and declining enrollment, the only real vehicle for improving the quality of public education is through inservice programs at all appropriate levels. While local, state, and federal agencies are funding proliferating and perhaps conflicting inservice programs, the local Teacher Corps inservice experiences are based on collaborative decision making by the local community, schools, and university. A questionnaire was devised that provided data on eleven elements of teacher attitudes toward inservice programs, which were rated by agreement categories. The findings are listed in thirteen groups, including: (1) recruitment patterns; (2) motivations for participation; (3) sources of inservice leadership; (4) least helpful functions of leaders; (5) sources of programs; and (6) most helpful participant roles. On the basis of the findings, ten recommendations are made. (FG)

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COLLABORATIVE RESEARCH STUDY

OF THE

DEANS' COUNCIL

IN-SERVICE TRAINING PROGRAMS

FOR

TEACHERS IN TEACHER CORPS

AND

NON-TEACHER CORPS SCHOOLS

UTILIZING A QUESTIONNAIRE INSTRUMENT

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1. Problem Statement

This research project was undertaken to assess the extent to which teacher respondents within schools affiliated with the Northeastern University/Boston Teacher Corps project have perspectives about the characteristics and patterns of in-service/professional development experience which are the same or different from those of teachers in a non-Teacher Corps district of Boston and from those of groups of teachers in other representative urban, suburban, and rural cities and towns in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. It was hoped that the results would provide information, not only about the quantitative extent of similarity and difference in outlook in these communities, but that they would also provide data on the degree of satisfaction with current programs and indirect clues about preferred in-service models and practices.

Since this survey was undertaken in the early stages of Northeastern's collaboration with the three designated Teacher Corps schools, teacher involvement in the initial Teacher Corps activities was somewhat limited, and the number of questionnaire respondents was therefore smaller than in communities in which administrators simply blanketed their schools and retrieved the completed forms. Consequently the ratio of Teacher Corps teacher respondents is one third of the non-Teacher Corps Boston respondents and the total number of all the nine large and small communities surveyed is seven times that of the non-Teacher Corps respondents from Boston. Nevertheless, the computer has made it possible to keep percentages precise and to maintain appropriate ratios. The results gained from the computer printouts indicate ^{some} consistency among all communities surveyed, including the Teacher Corps group, as well as some interesting variations from the standard trends within the results from the Teacher Corps group. It would be interesting to find out whether any striking trends that emerge in the Teacher Corps data hold up and grow in the future, or decline, and to ascertain to what extent they are influenced by the unique forms of in-service programs offered within Teacher Corps schools, and unavailable elsewhere.

It is therefore recommended that a follow-up study be made of the Teacher Corps schools and of the control group in two or three years. The data currently available could then be compared for analysis of teacher perception of in-service patterns and experiences and the extent to which Teacher Corps respondents deviate or conform to prevailing non-Teacher Corps results. At that time greater numbers of people will have participated in Teacher Corps experiences and the Teacher Corps respondent sample should be larger. The variety of experiences completed should also be greater and their impact more evident. Henceforth Teacher Corps respondent data will be referred to as T.C., non-Teacher Corps data from the city of Boston will be referred to as N.T.C. and the data from all the communities combined will be referred to as ALL.

Analysis will be done only upon data from teacher questionnaires. An administrative questionnaire comparable to the teacher questionnaire is available and could be used in a follow-up study if the design of the information retrieval system is modified somewhat.

II. Rationale

In view of the fact that there is likely to be little turnover in the faculty of public schools due to a declining birth rate and fiscal constraints, the only real vehicle for improving the quality of public education is through in-service programs at all levels that are appropriate and effective in terms of objectives, content, organization and implementation. Local, state and federal agencies are currently spending millions of dollars to support in-service efforts in such areas as Bilingual Education, Special Education, Professional Development, Multiculturalism, Integrated Learning, Individualization, Community Involvement, Vocational Education and many others.

There are dangers in proliferating in-service programs without some ability to make qualitative judgments and to differentiate among different patterns, frenetic activity which is merely a response to current fads in the marketplace, without consideration of underlying assumption and priorities, and of impact on other programs and people may not only prove wasteful and damaging to the client but may blemish the reputation of institutions that offer such hastily designed proposals. I, therefore, feel that a careful examination of the strengths and weaknesses of in-service programming is urgently needed, and can be of significant theoretic importance as well as of great practical value.

The specific Teacher Corps in-service experiences based on collaborative decision-making by the community, schools, and the university need scrutiny and evaluation to ascertain whether the climate of the schools and the quality of learning experiences are improved by a new cohesiveness among the aforementioned parties. An effort has been made to isolate the reactions of Teacher Corps teachers from non-Teacher Corps teachers and to see to what extent their perceptions of the type of options that have been available, or should be made available to them is affected by their exposure to Teacher Corps philosophy and procedures.

III. Methodology

A teacher questionnaire was devised that was structured to provide data on:

- a) Recruitment patterns for in-service experiences with variables relating to which categories of teachers were identified as potential participants and whether the selection process was voluntary or required.
- b) Motivations for participation in in-service programs with variables ranging from compulsion and social benefits, to professional motives and the types of rewards available.
- c) Sources that initiated programs with variables ranging from different categories of school personnel, to community people and the availability of federal funds for particular types of programs.
- d) Sources of personnel for in-service leadership with variables ranging from internal personnel to university, community or governmental personnel.
- e) Role of participants in in-service experiences with variables ranging from passive to active forms of activity and from individual to group work.
- f) The type of leadership style and the amount and type of work expected by the leader.
- g) The topics of in-service programs with variables relating to skills, content, student needs, teacher needs, supervision and school administration.
- h) The types of evaluation used with variables ranging from no evaluation to rigorous comparisons of defined achievement to predefined objectives.
- i) Unmet needs as perceived by participants with variables ranging from subject area background, to teaching proficiency, to professional relationships, to curriculum rationales, to the responsibilities of the schools, to affective experiences.
- j) The quantitative extent to which participants felt that in-service objectives had been achieved.

- k) The extent to which in-service participants have had their viewpoints changed on a range of variables from learners needs, to philosophy, to teacher effectiveness, to community issues and problems to competence in content and skill areas, to professional governance and decision making.

Variables were coded either as: frequently, sometimes, rarely and never and/or by helpful or unhelpful, and/or by least helpful or most helpful, and/or by a great deal, somewhat or not at all.

Absolute frequencies were used and cumulative percentages for the highest and lowest percentage of combinations of frequently and sometimes were presented as indications of trends and preferences. The three populations that were compared were defined as T.C. = Teacher Corps, N.T.C. = Non-Teacher Corps Boston, and ALL as the total number of respondents. In all other cases frequencies were given individually for a great deal or for helpful and not as a sum of two as when frequently and sometimes were added together and a composite percentage was provided.

IV. Findings

A. Recruitment Patterns #6 (variables 16-22)

There was general agreement in all three populations that the most widely used form of recruitment for in-service was system wide announcements with no special target population either invited or required to attend. To the extent that a target population is identified, it tends to be by grade level or subject area but participation is generally voluntary. T.C. teachers indicated that tenured teachers are sometimes invited to attend. Among the ALLS the fourth highest percentage variable of seven variables indicates that groups of teachers are required to attend. Among Boston teachers, both T.C. and N.T.C. the required attendance variable had the lowest percentage of frequency.

B. Motivations for Participation #7 (variables 23-36)

The variables with the highest percentage in the three groups were #25, topic was of interest, followed by #33 information would be received from an authority. #28, fellow teacher recommended the program was third favored by T.C. respondents in contrast to N.T.C. respondents who preferred #34, opportunity to manipulate materials and strategies, and ALL who preferred #26, needed help on topic. The least preferred answer in both T.C. respondents and N.T.C. respondents was that a program was required.

C. Sources of In-Service Leadership that were least helpful #10 (variables 42-56)

T.C. respondents selected first least helpful, #55 parent or community person, second least helpful, person from another school system, and third least helpful their own internal principals. T.C. respondents found #48 university consultants most helpful followed by #49, State, Federal or local agency personnel.

N.T.C. respondents agreed on the same first three as being least helpful but in a somewhat different order.

ALL respondents found internal teacher least helpful, university consultant second least helpful and personnel from another school system third least helpful. T.C. and N.T.C. respondents thought consultants from a university most helpful and State, Federal

or local agency person second most helpful. ALL respondents thought State, Federal or local agency personnel most helpful and parent or community member personnel second most helpful.

Sources of Programs #9 (variables 142-150)

Understandably T.C. and N.T.C. respondents ranked #149 Federal Funds first. The second was #142 teachers for all three groups. Third ranking in all groups are either administrator of Department Head or subject area specialist. In this configuration the conspicuous element of federal support for urban school systems that have been in the process of desegregation is apparent.

#148 School Boards and Committee, pupils or students #147 and parents and community sources #146 are the lowest three in ranking in T.C. and N.T.C., the Boston communities, while federal funding #149 is third lowest in ALL. While it is reasonable that #146, Parents and Community sources should begin low in the T.C. schools, this variable is likely to increase in importance in the future and it should be watched on follow-up studies.

Programs Led By #10 (variables 48-56)

T.C. and N.T.C. respondents agree that the most helpful in-service programs are run first by consultants from universities #48, and second by state, federal or local agency personnel #49. According to these two groups of respondents in varying order of one to three, the least helpful programs were run by person from another school system, internal principal or parent or community member. The ALL group felt that an internal teacher was least helpful, followed by a university consultant, followed by a member from another school system. ALL also felt that government agency people had been most helpful and parent and community persons second most helpful.

The most helpful participants roles were found to be as follows: #11(variables 57-62)

T.C., N.T.C. and ALL agreed that #60 working alone was most helpful. T.C. and N.T.C. both felt #61 working in groups was second most preferred and #57 to receive experiences

planned by others was the third most preferred arrangement. ALL had #57 as second most preferred arrangement and #58 to plan experiences to be utilized in program the third most preferred. All three groups seemed disinclined to work on experiences that were intended to relate directly to programs for learners, #58 and #59.

Least Helpful Functions of Leaders #12 (variables 63-76)

T.C. and N.T.C. seemed to find least helpful those programs that engaged participants in direct experiences #68. T.C. disliked leadership that was only a resource to be activated on request (#66) second least, and simulated experiences third least. The other categories for N.T.C. and ALL were not congruent with one another or with T.C.

T.C., N.T.C. and ALL seemed to prefer more active leadership roles. T.C. most preferred persons competent in areas described in variable #75, followed by leaders providing written assignments #71, followed by a lecturing leader #63. N.T.C. went along with lecturing and for a need for some evaluation #73 and some required assignments #67. ALL also wanted required assignments #67 and some written work #71.

Topics of In-Service That Were Helpful #13 (variables 77-95)

T.C., N.T.C. and ALL agree that the most helpful topic was attitudes and values of children #78. There is a lot of agreement also about meeting needs of special learners #84, use of curricular materials #79 in the case of T.C. and ALL, and teaching methods #80 in the case of N.T.C. The fourth most frequent choice among all respondents is background and content for teachers #85.

Least helpful were topics on administration of schools #92 and supervision #93 in all three groups and personal needs of personnel #94 in T.C. and ALL, and physical space #81 in N.T.C. These seem not as useful to teachers perhaps because the topics may be seen as administrative concerns.

Nature of Evaluation of Programs #14 (variables 96-104)

Although the ranking from first to third highest varies for T.C. and N.T.C., evaluation seems to take the form of #101, questionnaires for use by school system, questionnaires for use by the in-service leader, #98, and informal discussions at end of in-service course or workshop, #97. ALL does not include questionnaires for use by system among its highest three ranks and select instead no evaluation, #96, in the third rank slot. This suggests that both T.C. and N.T.C. regions in the city of Boston do somewhat more with evaluation than do the other communities even though Boston tends toward casual informal patterns of evaluation rather than predefined, rigorous forms of evaluation. The lowest percentage rankings among T.C. and ALL were for observation by administrators of teacher performance for program impact, #99, and peers observing one another for program impact #100, and all respondents agreed that the variable on administration assessment of products of particular programs #101, as third or fourth from the lowest rank. If rigorous evaluation patterns were used in schools those variables which were assigned the lower percentages would receive the highest percentages.

The picture that emerges from the data is that in-service programs are evaluated very casually, if at all, and even the limited impressionistic data that is gathered is not used for diagnostic purposes that modify the substance and structure of subsequent programs.

Evaluation of Leaders (Least Helpful) #15 (variables 105-113)

Data on this question seems to indicate that the least helpful leaders in various rankings from first to fourth highest demonstrate contradictions between methods and objectives, #110, and in some cases between structure and objectives, #111 as well, that they were too passive #109, and T.C. and ALL felt that they were not sufficiently knowledgeable about subject matter, #105. Interestingly, the T.C. teacher group felt that another characteristic of leaders that was least helpful was too much dominance, #108.

This variable was much less significant to N.T.C. and ALL teachers by about 40% points.

Data on variable #106 receives the lowest percentage. It can be inversely inferred that leaders that are most helpful are demanding and secondly that the more harmony between content and objectives, #112, the more helpful the leader is.

Unmet Needs #16 (variables 114-124)

T.C., N.T.C. and ALL agree and place in first or second highest positions the need for more opportunities for professional exchange #117. T.C. and ALL also select in one of these first two positions the need for greater information in subjects. All agree on the need for communication of teaching materials #121 as important in the third slot and T.C. and ALL agree on personal development #122 as a fourth ranking unmet need.

Comparatively low in importance among T.C., N.T.C. and ALL and therefore placed in the second lowest slot is analysis of the teacher's role #118. The T.C. groups' lowest rank fell to #116 sensitivity to attitudes and values of others and this was third lowest among ALL. It may be that sensitivity to attitudes and values of others was a met rather than an unmet need and that more in this area was unnecessary.

Extent To Which Objectives of In-Service Have Been Met #17 (variable 125)

T.C. respondents felt that the objectives of in-service programs were less well achieved than did N.T.C. and ALL respondents. ALL respondents ranked behind T.C. in the extent to which they felt objectives had been achieved. N.T.C. respondents seemed most satisfied with the extent to which objectives were met. The percentages were as follows. 33.3% of T.C. respondents felt that from 51% to 100% of the objectives had been met. 64.7% of N.T.C. respondents felt 51% to 100% of objectives had been met and 49.6% of ALL respondents felt that 51% to 100% of objectives had been met. Clearly the T.C. respondents are the least satisfied with the extent to which in-service objectives are met.

V. Recommendations

1. T.C. respondents' choice of variable #28 as a prominent factor, indicates that the recommendation of fellow teachers is motivating them to participate in in-service programs. This is not mentioned by the other two groups. More collegiality may be apparent in the T.C. group and a follow-up study would suggest to what extent this variable retains importance.
2. The unimportance to all respondents of having in-service activities that have direct input into the programs of children is surprising and further data on this point should be collected in follow-up studies.
3. There seems to be a preference on the part of all respondents for a more active leadership style. This bears further investigation and consideration. Better defined leadership patterns for in-service programs may be needed.
4. All respondents seem to feel a need for more content background in subject areas. This need should be considered in future in-service programs.
5. Follow-up study should compare past patterns of evaluation in T.C. schools to future ones to see if more rigorously structured in-service programs result in better evaluation strategies. It would also be important to review whether collected data increasingly becomes the basis for modification of newly designed and structured in-service programs.
6. T.C. teachers felt the most important variable in a least helpful leader was too much dominance in contrast to the other two groups that ranked that variable about 40% lower. This might be because of the notion of democratic decision making and shared responsibility in the T.C. philosophy. Follow-up studies should probe for more information on this subject.
7. Attention should be paid to meeting needs perceived to be great by teachers for #117, more opportunities to exchange ideas with professionals, #114, great information in subjects and #121, communication of teaching materials. Some exploration should take place about whether low ranking unmet need #116

indicates that schools meet this need in teachers or that the teachers don't consider this need to be of importance.

8. Even in areas in which change in viewpoint seems to have occurred, it is less than 33%. This suggests that in-service programs need to be designed and structured in a manner which relates input to output more directly and emphasizes practice and application of experiences. Administrators should feel responsible and accountable for achieving changes in thinking and practice as a result of the in-service programs offered by their schools. At this point follow-up impact studies, if done at all, are rare.
9. While it is reasonable that #146 parent and community sources should be initially unimportant in the T.C. schools, this variable is likely to increase in importance in the future and it should be watched in follow-up studies.
10. Further analysis of the conspicuously high level of dissatisfaction among T.C. respondents by comparison with N.T.C. and ALL respondents on extent of objectives met by in-service programs is necessary. Follow-up study should indicate whether T.C. designed in-service programs reduce the level of dissatisfaction among T.C. respondents. If there is a reduction, it may be assumed that the current level of dissatisfaction is with in-service programs that predated the advent of T.C.